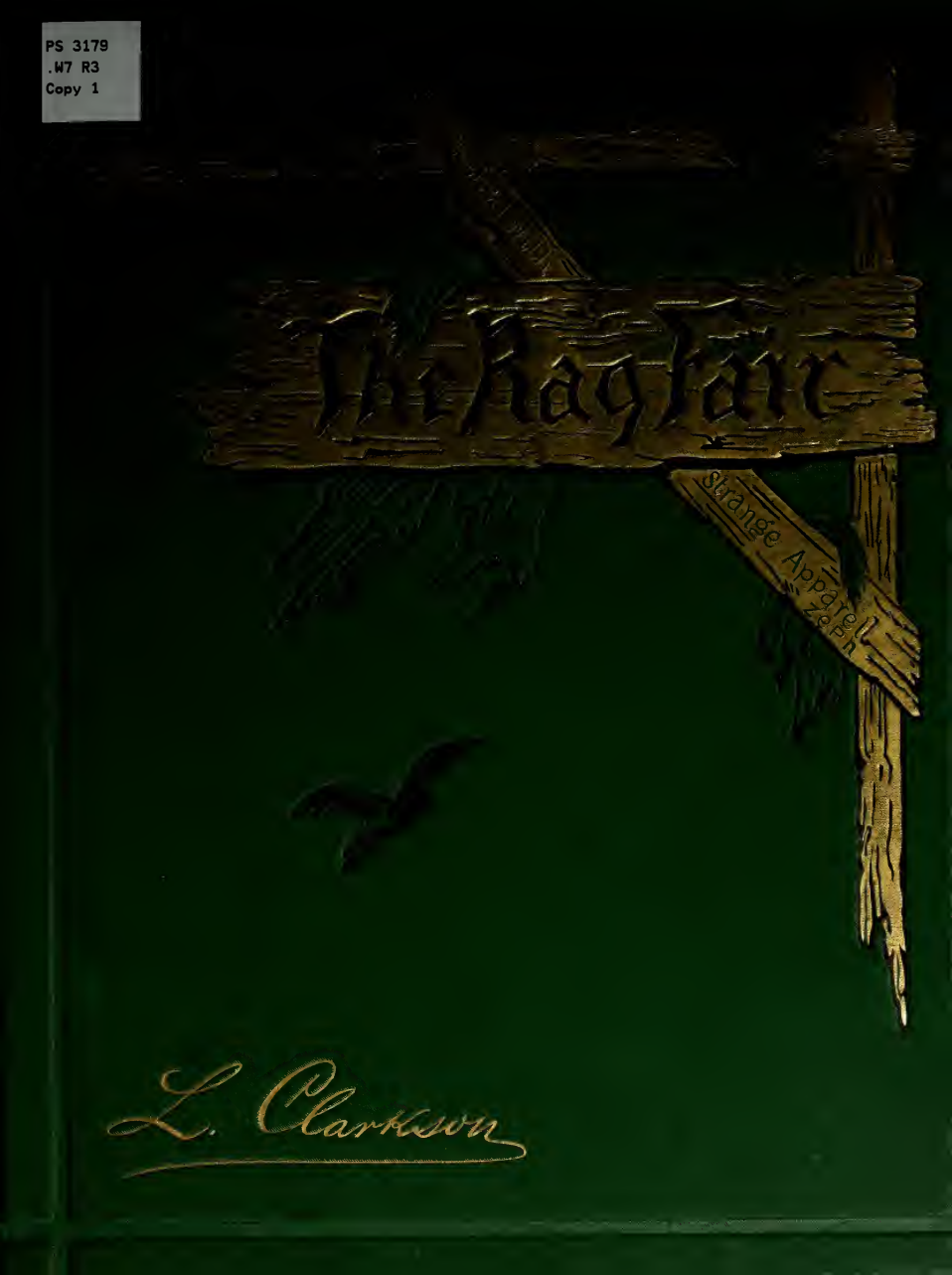
PS 3179
.W7 R3
Copy 1



LIBRARY OF CONGRESS.
Chap. RS 179 Copyright No.
Shelf W9 R3
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.

THE

RAG FAIR

AND

OTHER REVERIES.

BY

L. CLARKSON,

AUTHOR OF "VIOLET" AND "GATHERING OF THE LILIES."

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY THE AUTHOR.

PHILADELPHIA:

F. W. ROBINSON & CO.

1879.

PS 3179
W7 R3

Copyright 1878
by
F. W. Robinson & Co.

Allen, Lane & Scott,
Printers.

Drawing by
E. B. Bensell.
Engraving by
J. W. Lauderbach.

CONTENTS.

THE RAG FAIR: *A Twilight Reverie.*

ILLUSTRATIONS.

Title-page.
"I have read somewhere of a marvellous Rag Fair."
"What a wonderful collection."
"There are tiny robes."
"There are boyish frocks."
"There, too, is the lover's knot of blue."
"Tattered bits of the brave self-trust."
"And banished there are the locked-up cerements."
"Truly, 'twould be a ghostly array."
"And the life goes on."
"How strange to stand in that strange land."
"God help us all, as these earth-robes fall."
"We cannot know."
"God help us all! He knows our righteousness is but as filthy rags."
"So let us hope."

HADES: *The Reverie of a Philosopher.*

LIFE: *The Parson's Reverie.*

BREVIARY: *A Last Reverie.*

ILLUSTRATIONS.

"They come, and come from a vague somewhere."
"They wake and sleep, and cry for bread."
"They watch and wait, they toil and fret."
"Pausing at last on the shelving shore."
"They go and go to the vague somewhere."

DEDICATED

TO

MRS. D. L. BARTLETT.

IT is true that "*I have read somewhere*" of this fanciful "*Rag Fair for Spiritual Garments*," but where or what, I know not. It is one of those dim impressions which render it difficult to recognize an occasional idea as a possible memory. I have therefore used the conscientious quotation-marks to indicate a few thoughts which seemed to linger in my mind as recollections.

THE AUTHOR.

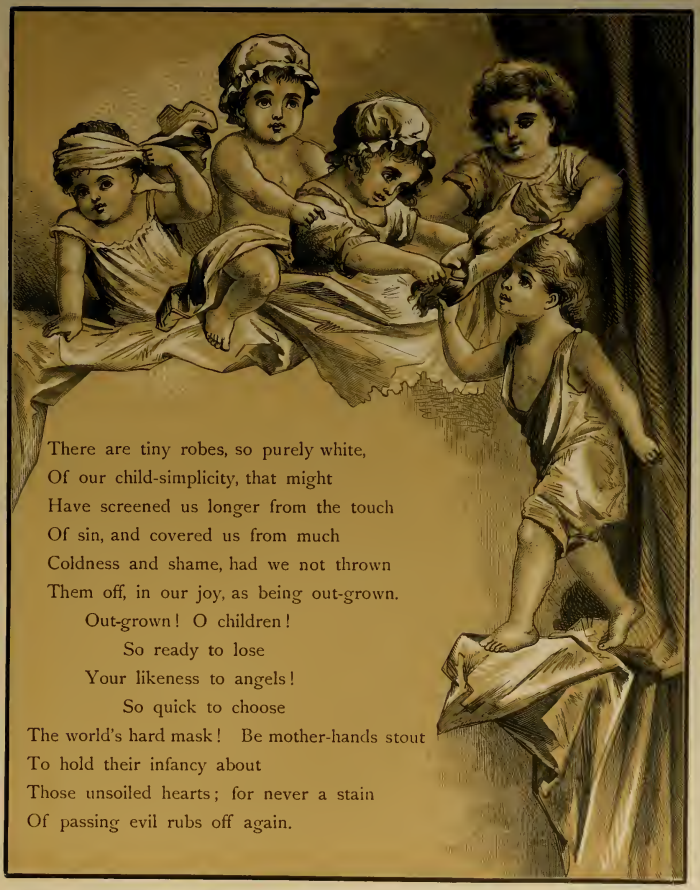
THE RAG FAIR.

A TWILIGHT REVERIE.

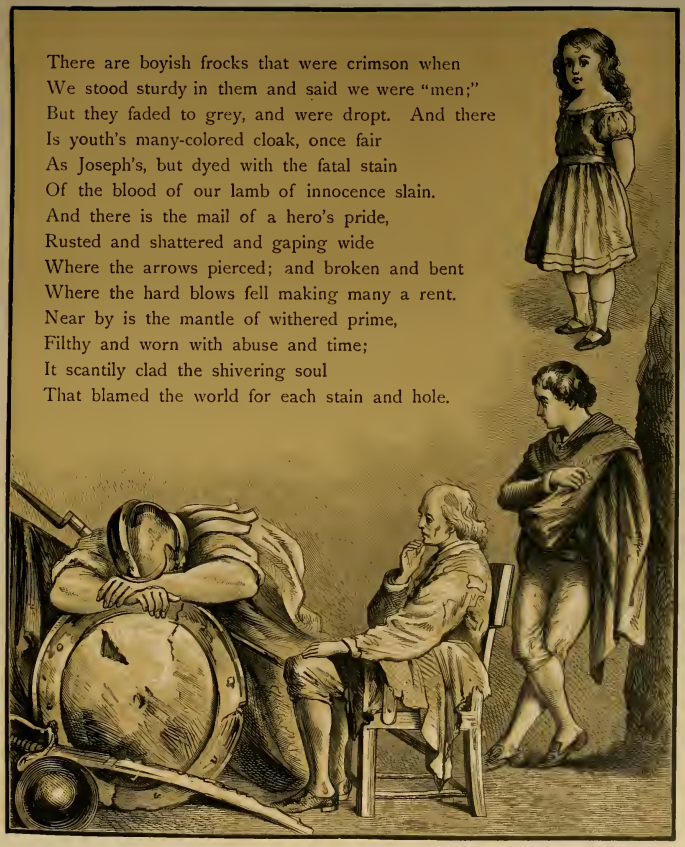
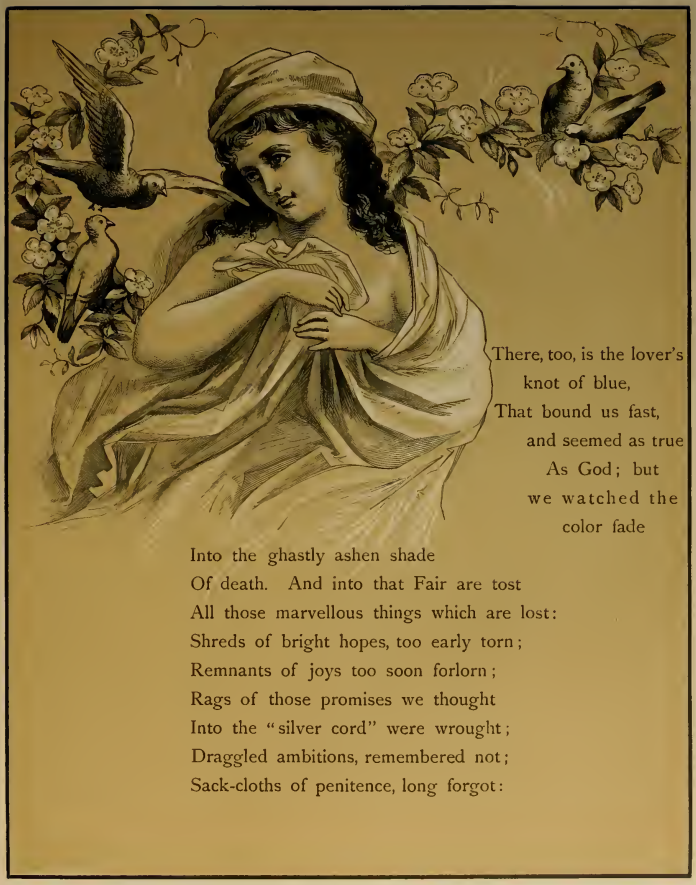
Clothed with Strange Apparel
The Rag-Fair
Desiring to be clothed upon, that being clothed we shall not be found naked."

I have read somewhere
of a marvellous "Rag Fair"
For Spiritual Garments, to be found
In some far, unknown region, on the bound
Of this angel-forsaken Eden, where
Our fall hath shamed our souls from standing bare
Before the god of Self, wise in their sin;
And so, for decency, we clothe them in
Vestments of Earth which Time filches away
And keeps in hiding 'till some
better day.

What a wonderful collection it would be,
And how it would amaze,
If one could see in some grim place,
Gathered together for eternity,
The cast-off raiment that men's souls have worn
To hide their barren want; or to adorn
Their shapely fullness; or belie their ill
In the sheep's-clothing made for wolf-wear still!

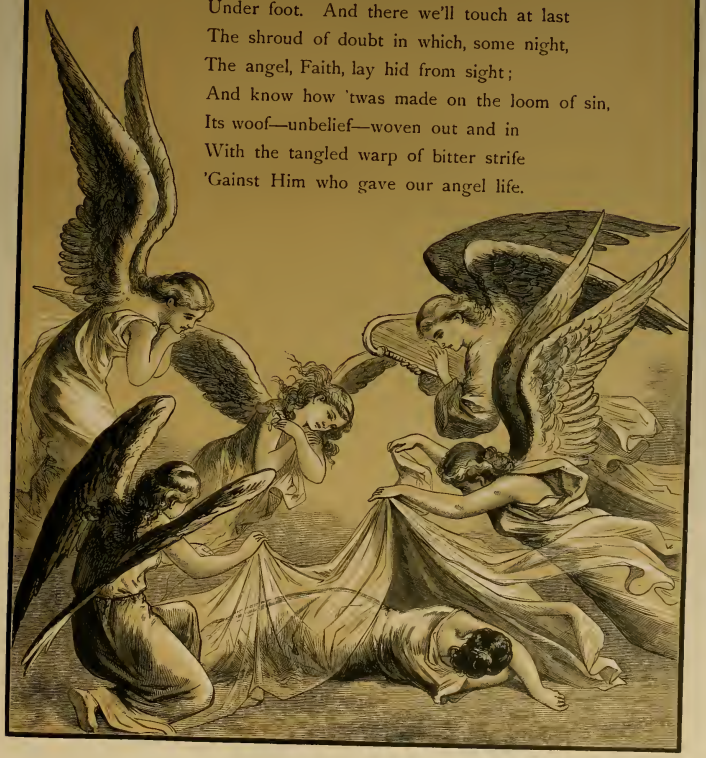


There are tiny robes, so purely white,
Of our child-simplicity, that might
Have screened us longer from the touch
Of sin, and covered us from much
Coldness and shame, had we not thrown
Them off, in our joy, as being out-grown.
Out-grown! O children!
So ready to lose
Your likeness to angels!
So quick to choose
The world's hard mask! Be mother-hands stout
To hold their infancy about
Those unsoiled hearts; for never a stain
Of passing evil rubs off again.


There are boyish frocks that were crimson when
We stood sturdy in them and said we were "men;"
But they faded to grey, and were dropt. And there
Is youth's many-colored cloak, once fair
As Joseph's, but dyed with the fatal stain
Of the blood of our lamb of innocence slain.
And there is the mail of a hero's pride,
Rusted and shattered and gaping wide
Where the arrows pierced; and broken and bent
Where the hard blows fell making many a rent.
Near by is the mantle of withered prime,
Filthy and worn with abuse and time;
It scantily clad the shivering soul
That blamed the world for each stain and hole.

There, too, is the lover's
knot of blue,
That bound us fast,
and seemed as true
As God; but
we watched the
color fade

Into the ghastly ashen shade
Of death. And into that Fair are tost
All those marvellous things which are lost:
Shreds of bright hopes, too early torn;
Remnants of joys too soon forlorn;
Rags of those promises we thought
Into the "silver cord" were wrought;
Draggled ambitions, remembered not;
Sack-cloths of penitence, long forgot:

Tattered bits of the brave self-trust,
Drawn round us when we sprang from the dust
Of a confidence betrayed and cast
Under foot. And there we'll touch at last
The shroud of doubt in which, some night,
The angel, Faith, lay hid from sight;
And know how 'twas made on the loom of sin,
Its woof—unbelief—woven out and in
With the tangled warp of bitter strife
'Gainst Him who gave our angel life.



And banished there are the locked-up cerements
Of lost, lost loves (not as cast-off garments
Thrust into dim corners of the Fair,—
For they are more than perishing wear,)
By memory carefully laid upon shelves,
Identified only by God and ourselves,

Each tied with the harmless bit of crape
That once, to our sad eyes, seemed to drape
The whole of the beautiful, glad world:—
It is but a string, now, limp and curled.
Perhaps, at first, we would scarcely know
The shrunken sign of our shrunken woe.

Truly 'twould be a ghostly array!
They clothed us once but were "clutched away
By the fingers" of Fates; or rent one day
By the thorns of disaster; or flung aside
In some sharp moment of wounded pride,
When apish Envy heard their gloss
Was wearing off. Or worse, our loss
May have been but a pitiful decay,—
A dropping off—a falling away

In tatters.—So, silently, one by one
They are left, and forgot. And the Life goes on:—
Goes on exulting towards its goal;

For the ties of earth
cannot bind the
Soul.
And when the hori-
zon grows low
and wide,
And near and plain
seems the other
side,

Naught follows the Soul from the world over past,
But its own swift shadow, downward cast.

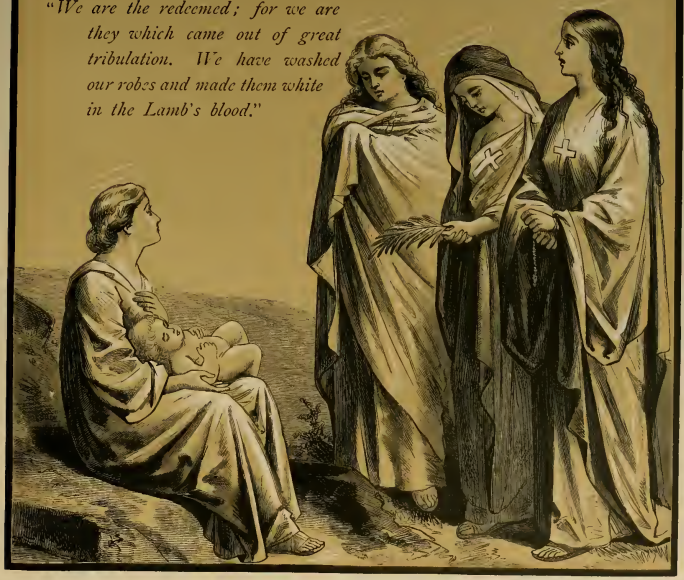
"Your riches are Corruptible, and your garments are moth eaten"
JAMES V. 2
"This Corruptible must put on Incorruption"
I Cor XV.

How strange to stand
In that strange land,
And hold these wretched fragments in our hand!
How we would search and linger by the heap,
Too sore to smile, too curious to weep;—
We'd lift each one up reverently, and try
To recognize it, pass it slowly by,
Sighing as much with wonder as with pain:
So strange 'twould be to meet spent lives again—
To shake hands with ourselves in long lost places—
Feeling half stranger with our own old faces.
'Twould be like lifting up the coffin-lid
To peer at some dead neighbor, so long hid
We scarcely think it worth our being shocked,
But look,—because the casket is unlocked.

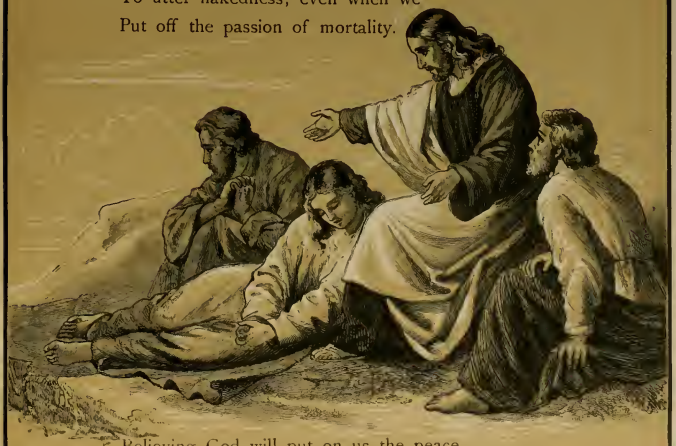
God help us all
As these earth-robes fall!
For *we* know not what vestures we shall wear
The next:—whether a purple, princely gown
Of high success; or ease, like robes of down;
Or harsh denials, like the camel's hair
The Prophet wore; or sable weeds of grief;
Or smooth white burial robes of last relief.

We cannot know.
We breathe below
The purer air of heavenly things made plain:
And what we choose,
And what we lose,
Are given or taken by hands unshaken
By mere desires; and when our souls awaken
The next glad dawn,
They will sing on,
Through all eternity, the wondrous strain:—

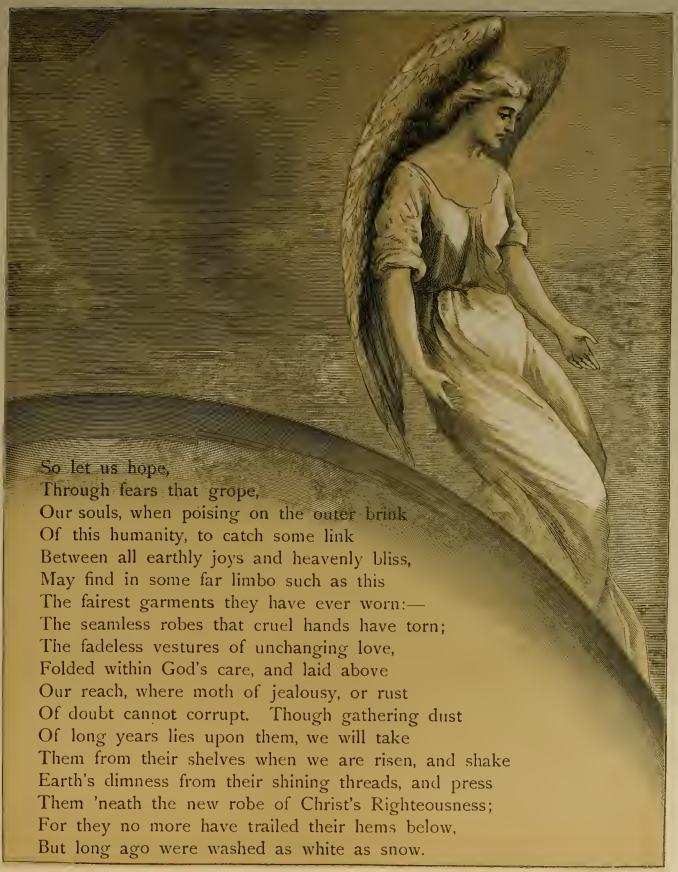
"*We are the redeemed; for we are they which came out of great tribulation. We have washed our robes and made them white in the Lamb's blood.*"



God help us all!—He knows "our righteousness
Is but as filthy rags," yet none the less
Has promised, as through earthly mire we toil,
To wash us at the last from every soil.
Yet scarce we stop, as our garments drop,
To ponder on the beauty of the thought,
That, with all changing, we are never brought
To utter nakedness; even when we
Put off the passion of mortality.



Believing God will put on us the peace
Of immortality, we smooth each crease
From out our wrinkled fame; we patch our pride
And darn our reputation—our best side
Turned outward, but our seams and stains concealed
From all but Christ—to whom all is revealed;—
By whom our rags are purged, and we are healed.



So let us hope,
Through fears that grope,
Our souls, when poising on the outer brink
Of this humanity, to catch some link
Between all earthly joys and heavenly bliss,
May find in some far limbo such as this
The fairest garments they have ever worn:—
The seamless robes that cruel hands have torn;
The fadeless vestures of unchanging love,
Folded within God's care, and laid above
Our reach, where moth of jealousy, or rust
Of doubt cannot corrupt. Though gathering dust
Of long years lies upon them, we will take
Them from their shelves when we are risen, and shake
Earth's dimness from their shining threads, and press
Them 'neath the new robe of Christ's Righteousness;
For they no more have trailed their hems below,
But long ago were washed as white as snow.

HADES.

THE REVERIE OF A PHILOSOPHER.

HADES.

THE REVERIE OF A PHILOSOPHER.

WHERE the earthly shade is
Growing deep,
Lies the silent Hades
Of our sleep.

No man knows the region,
Cold and grim,
Where his hopes, a legion,
Vanished dim.

Very strange and dreamless
  Is that rest,
Where the sun goes beamless
  Down the west.

Earth grows fainter, dimmer
  To our thought;
Heaven's far-off glimmer
  Scarce is caught.

Sights and shapes and fancies
  Mock our gaze,
And the Soul advances
  In amaze.

Vaguely seen, a river
  Hurries by;
We would halt and shiver;
  We would fly

From the flood beneath the
  Shelving brink—
Nearer is the Lethe
  Than we think.

But our groping spirits,
  Onward led,
Cannot pause to fear its
  Solemn tread.

Can we stem the water?
  In a breath,
While we gasp and falter,
  Pass we Death.

What is lying yonder?
  Wait and see.
One day we shall wander,
  I, with thee,

In the land of shadows,
  Nothing seen;
And in all the meadows,
  Nothing green.

Not a palm tree growing
  High and sweet;
Not a daisy blowing
  At our feet.

Not a glad bird singing
  Through the air;
Not a zephyr flinging
  Perfumes there.

Sad and low, the tuneless
  Winds are dead,
And the mists are moonless
  Over head;

Yet no sunlight quivers
  From that sky
To the cold, gray rivers
  Stealing by.

Is it eve, or sunrise?
  I know nought;
And the Soul is unwise
  Asking aught.

A strange land, where summer
  Has no part,
And forever dumber
  Grows thy heart.

A strange land! and lonely
  Is thy soul;
For each heart knows only
  Its own dole.

Just thy conscious spirit
  In all space;
Not an answer near it;
  Not a face,

Save the phantom faces,
  Sad, forlorn,
Shorn of earthly graces
  They had worn,

That will pass thee, dreary,
  Up and down,
Never chill nor cheer thee,
  Laugh nor frown.

Not a sense that made these
  Faces sweet
Will have place in Hades,
  When we meet.

Not a sound is human;
Not a view;
Not a man nor woman
Whom we knew;

Not a breathing mortal,
Loved before,
Greets us at the portal
Of a door.

'Though that door stands open,
Friend, beware!
Thou canst never grope in
Blindly there.

Hast thou come down fearless,
Through the night?
Was the river cheerless?
Was it bright?

When earth-loves receded
To depart,
Came some one and pleaded
For thy heart?

Hadst thou loved Him dearly,
All the way?
Didst thou see Him clearly
After day?

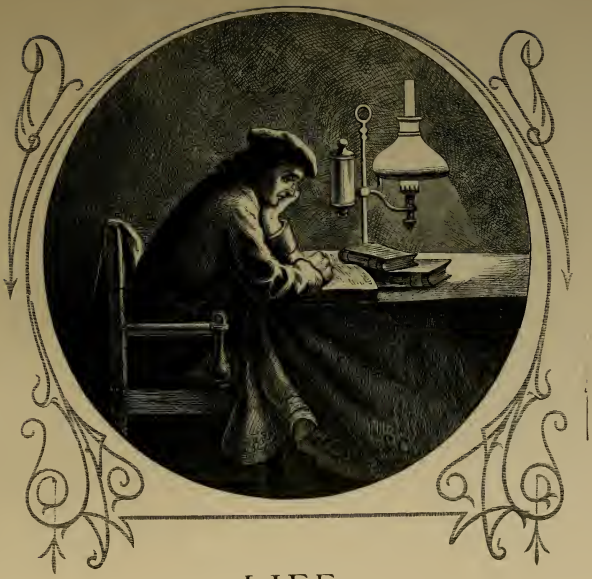
Then for thee are laid these
Golden streets;
At the edge of Hades
Some one greets;

Some one who has waited
Since thy birth,
Whilst thou were belated
On the earth;

Some one who will leave thee
Not alone,
But who will receive thee
As His own.

LIFE.

THE PARSON'S REVERIE.



LIFE.

THE PARSON'S REVERIE.

O BUSTLING and bewildering world,
Into whose din our lives are hurled,
How many souls with many voices
Fill you full of racking noises!
And tempers clash and hard wills jar,
And God's dear peace our passions mar.

Each thread of destiny is twined
Into the fate of humankind.
Our tears dim other spirits' brightness;
Our sins soil other spirits' whiteness—
(The father's crime is visited
Upon the children's guiltless head);
It drags us down that some will creep,
And we are clogs to some that leap;
"But some are fallen asleep."

O toiling lives, so poorly filled!
O troubled hearts, so seldom stilled!
How shifted needs, and duties slighted,
And broken vows,—loves unrequited,—
Jostle each other rudely through
The crowded days! How some must screw
And pinch to live; some live to clutch
From poor men's "little" all their "much";
But want will sweeten hardest bread,
Remorse will pierce the softest bed,
While grief has comforts of her own
And is not left to mourn alone.
For still some sow, while others reap,
And many starve that few may heap;
"And some are fallen asleep."

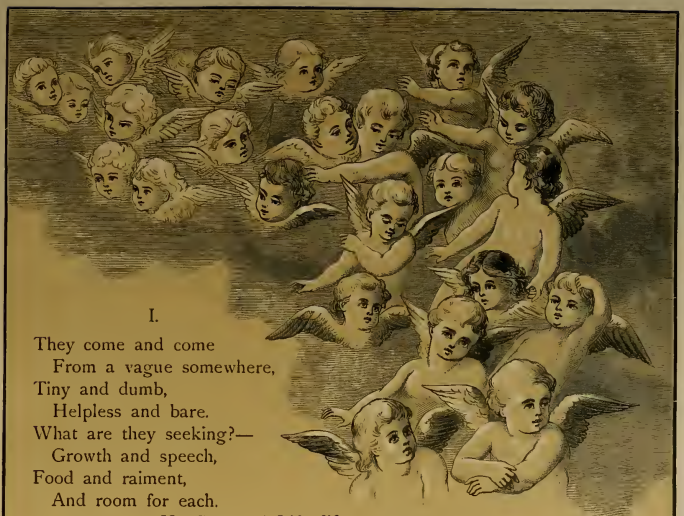
There are so many ways in life;
This one is peace, and that one strife.
A few run smoothly day by day,
The most are stony all the way.
To some, the storms of woe come never,
To some, the rain seems falling ever.
Men who are faithless grasp no trust
To call their souls up from the dust,

While some climb blindly, with the hope
Their hands will, some day, cease to grope,
Full-satisfied; and God—He knows
How each blind-driven pilgrim goes;
For He is just to me and you,
And makes His endless balance true,
And, holding all things in His keep,
He wisely gives to laugh or weep,
And some "He giveth sleep."

O men! ye schemers, workers, drones,—
Ye misers, spendthrifts, how your tones
Grate on each other. Is there none,
Of all the choir around the throne
Where heavenly harmonies are poured,
Can sweep the angel's decachord,
And find a higher, nobler key
To tune the world's discordancy!
Does God hear voices of His own,
Amid the universal moan?
For men who live cry out for death,
And dying men shriek back for breath,
While He (who never checks our prayers
To tell us of the many cares
His children, in all times, let fall
On Him), still "careth" for them all,
And heeds the bleating of His sheep,
Guiding them down the earthly steep:
"He giveth His beloved sleep."

Breviary.

A LAST REVERIE.



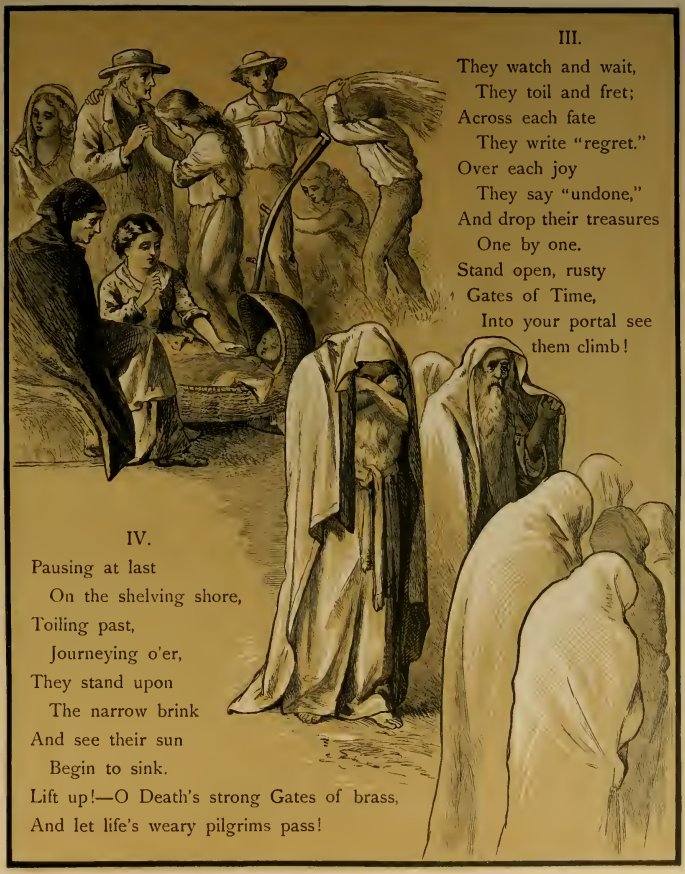
I.

They come and come
From a vague somewhere,
Tiny and dumb,
Helpless and bare.
What are they seeking?—
Growth and speech,
Food and raiment,
And room for each.

Ye Gates of Life, lift up anew,
And let earth's little travelers through!

II.

They wake and sleep,
And cry for bread;
They laugh and weep,
And their wants are fed.
What do they ask now?—
Love and hope,
And after pleasures
Grope and grope.
Lift up, ye pearly Gates of Peace,
And let their restless
longings cease!



III.

They watch and wait,
They toil and fret;
Across each fate
They write "regret."
Over each joy
They say "undone,"
And drop their treasures
One by one.
Stand open, rusty
Gates of Time,
Into your portal see
them climb!

IV.

Pausing at last
On the shelving shore,
Toiling past,
Journeying o'er,
They stand upon
The narrow brink
And see their sun
Begin to sink.
Lift up!—O Death's strong Gates of brass,
And let life's weary pilgrims pass!

V.

They go and go
  To the vague somewhere;
Little they know
  Of the future there—
Naught they take
  From the years of earth,—
Empty-handed
  As at their birth.

Fling wide, O golden gates of Heaven!
Let in the world—redeemed, forgiven.

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS
0 018 603 110 6